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ABSTRACT

Teachers should use various forms of play in programs for handicapped children. Music, movement education, cooking, art, and dramatics are all appropriate types of play and instruction. (DB)

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PLAY TO LEARN AND LEARN TO PLAY

Presentation: CEC 54th International Convention
Chicago, Illinois April 4th through 9th, 1976

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One of the greatest means of developing the mind and body is through play. The role of recreation as an important educational tool, as well as an important life time tool for the exceptional child has for too long been overlooked. We have prepared an hour and a half program demonstrating through slides and the sounds of your participation, the way recreation can and should be used with all types of children from the many areas of exceptionalities. Children who are gifted, mentally retarded, behavior disordered, physically handicapped, multisensory impaired, visually impaired and who are classified as "noncategorical" but who are full of needs for service, will be shown in numerous types of recreational activities.

Play is one of the very best ways to learn. Not only that, but it is the most fun. When you are having a good time, you are totally absorbed in the experience, and it becomes part of you. No one can take it away from you. Normally, play is the occupation of the child. It is the surest way for him to grow, to learn, to stretch his capacities, to find out about himself and the world around him, and to play various roles as he develops his self image and gazes down the years into his future. Play is self expression, emotional outlet and therapy. So we have play therapy, role playing, art- music- and drama-therapy. All of these have emerged from the combination of therapy within the lexicon of the recreation field.

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In my work with multisensory impaired children, there is so much work going on. Notice I said work. Our children have had so much done to them -- you know, the infantile cataracts removed, the heel cord lengthening, heart surgery, catheterization, EEG's and EKG's, tumor removal, shunt insertions, skin grafts, braces, and a dozen other miseries, that we read glibly in their records as we plan a strategy to see how they can learn. And we have the technology for that structured learning too. You know it as well as I do. Diagnosis and prescription for teaching; task analysis, behavior modification (or management, or therapy, which ever your system prefers); contingencies of reinforcement, schedules, graphs, timetables, and of course evaluation procedures. We need them all. But along with response development in teaching children how to learn, we need to be sure that we are involved in what Virginia Satir calls "Peoplemaking" -- developing personality, spontaneous laughter, and a sense of humor. Scott Curtis's study of rubella children in which he used video tapes of many different children in many different teaching and learning situations revealed a striking dearth of play and fun in their lives in school. Teaching and playing must be interwoven into the day's activities for handicapped children. They are not poles apart. For the child whose psychic energies and physical energies have been completely absorbed by the maintenance of life, staying alive through countless habilitative procedures, play must be taught and teaching must be play. The combination is beautiful, it works, and you will love it!

Let's talk about some of the things you can play with. How about music -- I think it's beautiful if you can play some nice portable musical instrument -- like guitar or a ukelele, and if not one of those classical instruments to play and sing to, how about the autoharp. Our teachers learned the autoharp by the chord method. They practiced when we took our kids to camp -- we sang only songs that

Jane and Catherine could play. Or if playing is too complex while you hold a child in your lap and move his hands to clap, you can always sing -- and if you are tone deaf, well there is always the record player -- and nowadays there are lots of songs of toilet training, toothbrushing, shoe lacing, coat buttoning and sweater-hanging-up. I remember the one we all sang with enthusiasm when Carrie "did not wet her pants today!" And Carrie's language developed so well that when the Grand Jury came around to visit to see what this 'special education" was all about, Carrie rushed to tell them that she had not wet her pants that day. Our Director of Special Education who was accompanying this august body, said, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, that's what it is all about."

As a language and concept developer, music is tops -- and one of my favorite teachers, who could bounce her fingers across the ancient school piano with great ease -- you know the type -- had a way of introducing each child to his own instrument, according to his ability. One had so little hand strength that all he could do was to tap the bongo drum with the heavy bang of a butterfly's wing -- but she made such a fuss over this that he tried harder to be heard, and was featured in a solo bit where everything else remained silent. It was sort of a bongo solo. But sticks, and bells, clappers, and sand blocks can help develop coordination and motivation in many different kinds of children.

Movement and language can be interwoven to music. At the deaf-blind center at Callier Speech and Hearing Center in Dallas, the physical therapist and the teacher whose goal was communication through expressive and receptive language, quickly discovered that they could reinforce each other. "Down" said the physical therapist as she helped the child bend toward his feet. "Up" said the communication teacher, "up, up, up" as she moved the child's arm up in the air to help him understand up.

Movement education through recreation is a whole area in itself, beginning with rolling on a mat on the floor, and playing pat-a-cake. You know that's a pretty good game -- it includes imitation, rhythm, coordination, interaction, crossing the midline, alternation, language development, social skills, spontaneous laughter - all the things so many of our kids need help in developing. We are going to show you a lot of things from Orff-Schulwerk that are so much fun, and so developing of these responses, that you will have as much fun as the young child who has just discovered patti-cake. And so you will not forget how to say and to demonstrate "The witch has an itch", we have handouts of the rhymes so you can try them out at home with your group.

How about cooking -- do you do any cooking in your class? In these days of crock pots, and toaster ovens, grills and 7-speed blenders and hotplates, it is possible to do all kinds of cooking operations in the classroom. From mixing the morning orange juice, to making a pot of vegetable soup from scratch and then eating it for lunch -- the activities are endless. Linda's class made the soup, each one bringing a vegetable to be included, washing and peeling, and slicing each one to go into the crockpot. One child poured tomato juice into the pot to moisten the vegetables, and while the soup was not quite ready by lunch time -- crockpots are slow you know. They were able to eat it before they went home at three, however. That was a class of four year old TMR's.

In a deaf-blind multi-handicapped class the teacher, who had done much with cooking and preparing simple things with her class, planned a round lunch. They discussed it for days, in signs and in gestures, and in preliminary oral speech. They examined things that were round -- they looked at pictures in magazines. They showed Stephanie, who was totally blind, but had fair hearing, what round was. Then they decided on the menu -- pizza, round oranges and round cookies. Can you

imagine the amount of learning that took place and the excitement of the children, children who have had most things done for them in their lives, in getting ready for the "Round Lunch"? The eating of it was the ultimate pleasure but it had been fun all along the preparation way.

Ira Gordon, in his book Baby Learning Through Baby Play, talks about the Supermarket School - with dozens of ideas for learning through shopping -- so if you have the opportunity to shop for the ingredients you are going to use in cooking with your children, you can imatine the fun and learning you can combine.

Have you ever finger painted with chocolate pudding? It is the most marvelous method for introducing blind children to finger paint. So many blind children hate putting their hands into funny textures, but with chocolate pudding you can lick your fingers and enjoy the taste as well as the considerable benefits to be derived from swirling your hands and fingers over the paper. And though it takes ages to dry, it is worth waiting for because a tatlly blind child can feel the ridges and see what he has made. And they can be hung up for a short period of time for the benefit of those who can see and for visitors. I don't think you would want to keep them forever though!

There are so many art experiences which are great for our children. I personally like three dimensional things -- clay and papier mache -- puppets for role playing and body image activities. Working out feelings and values, emotional conflicts and self expression can all be done through art and drama activities. Paper bags can be made into puppets, or cut apart and fringed to make Indian vests, and all sorts of costumery. Our visually impaired students in a summer school program decided to make a play out of the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff. Sounds simple, doesn't it? The kind of thing done in every nursery school. But this production became a major activity for ten visually impaired students ranging

in age from seven to fourteen. The dramatists in the group wrote the script in contemporary language suitable for the now generation. The puppet stage was made from a three part screen which was painted and decorated. They made the puppets from papier mache, made their costumes, rehearsed their parts, then taped the dialogue so that they could concentrate on the puppet action during the performance. They invited parents and friends, made punch and cookies for refreshments, and the show was on! One of our little girls who was totally blind decided to be the frog who sat under the bride saying "Riddit" every time a billy goat walked across. And John, the deep voiced second grader, made a marvelous scarey troll. There was so much group activity involved in this production, so much planning, so much budgeting of time, so many decisions to be made by the children as a group that it was an incomparable learning activity, which was also a play activity -- fun and motivating too.

A handicapped youngster often needs help in learning to play. He cannot be expected to initiate a search for good leisure time activities. We may need to help him extend his experiences and to discover how to have a good time in their free time. How to interact with toys and games, and with other children. Recreation should be part of their instructional education so that they too can attain a fulfilling and self-rewarding life.

RESOURCE LIST: LEARN TO PLAY AND PLAY TO LEARN

(A Partial Listing of Helpful Aids)

Anderson, Fay Bennett, Fay's First Fifty: activities for the young and the severely handicapped. FACT 3701 Lexington Dr., Augusta, Ga. 30906.

Burie, Audrey A. & Heltsche, M. A., Reading With A Smile. Acropolis Books, Washington, D. C., 1975.

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Uhlin, Donald, Art for Exceptional Children. Wm. Brown & Co., Dubuque, Iowa.

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Schaefer, Henry Simmern, The Unfolding of Artistic Activity. University of Calif. Press.

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Rowland, Kurt, Learning to See, Vols. 1-5. Van Nostrand Reinhold Co. (or Ginn & Co. - two publishers are listed). A Basic Course in Visual Education. Five text-books with accompanying workbooks and teacher's books.

Sykes, Kim; Watson, Gail & Menze, Ray, Creative Arts and Crafts for Children with Visual Handicapps.

National Dairy Council - many items in nutrition education with beautiful pictures, Little Ideas, Big Ideas. (Set up in units with outcomes specified, pre-assess-ment, etc.)

Plus, Spice, Create, Probe, etc. - games and play activities in reading, math, science, etc. - all excellent. Educational Service, Inc., P. O. Box 219, Stevensville, Michigan 49127.

RECORDS:

Brazelton, Arulerose, Clap, Snap and Tap. Educational Activities Records, Freeport, New York 11520. Many more available, send for catalog.

Palmer, Hap, Learning Basic Skills Through Music, Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, AR 514, 522, 521, 526. Home Made Band, #AR 545.

Mr. William Wakeland, Orff Workshops, Division of Music, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana 47306.